Large aquatic rhizomatous herbs. Leaves parallel-veined, simple, all basal, arranged in 2-3 rows, V- or M-shaped in cross section. Inflorescence a globose, many-flowered, terminal head, subtended by several spreading to reflexed, leafy bracts. Peduncle triangular in cross section, inflorescence shorter than the leaves. Flowers actinomorphic, tubular. Tepals 6. Stamens 6, exceeding the tepals. Fruit a 3-cornered, loculicidal capsule, 3-seed. Seeds fusiform with a spike-like process at each end densely covered with recurved hairs.

A family with one genus, Thurnia, and three species, occurring in the Guianas, and adjacent Amazon region. Represented in the Reserva Ducke by one species only. An aquatic family resembling Cyperaceae.


Aquatic herbs, 0.5-1.5 m high. Leaves linear, 0.7-1.5 m long, 2-3.5 cm wide, stiff, ending in a long tail-like apex, margin finely serrate. Inflorescence 3-6 cm in diam., subtended by 3-9 leafy bracts 5-30 cm long, 2-3 cm wide. Flowers white. Tepals 6, spathulate, 10-30 mm long, to 1 mm wide. Stamens 6, much exceeding the tepals. Fruit 10-15 mm long. Seeds 3, purplish or brownish, 5-8 mm long.

In the Guianas and Amazonian Brazil. Occurring in or along creeks, on white sand; seeds are dispersed by fish.

Flowering and fruiting in January, March, June and September.
